

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Sixty-sixth meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 11-15 January 2016

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Species trade and conservation

SAIGAAANTELOPE (SAIGA SPP.)

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. At its 16th meeting (CoP16, Bangkok, 2013), the Conference of the Parties adopted nine decisions on *Saiga antelope*, as follows:

Directed to the range States of the saiga antelope (Kazakhstan, Mongolia, the Russian Federation, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan)

14.91 *In order to contribute to the effective implementation of CITES, all range States of Saiga tatarica should fully implement the measures directed to them that are contained in the Medium-Term International Work Programme for the Saiga Antelope (2011-2015) [MTIWP (2011-2015)], developed in support of the Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation, Restoration and Sustainable Use of the Saiga Antelope (Saiga spp.) and its Saiga Action Plan.*

14.93 *All range States of Saiga spp. should provide information on the measures and activities they undertook to implement the Medium-Term International Work Programme for the Saiga Antelope (2011-2015) via the online Saiga Resource Centre and its associated project database, managed under the auspices of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS).*

16.95 *All range States of Saiga spp. are encouraged to communicate their priorities for in situ conservation action to the CITES and CMS Secretariats, inter alia, to share such information with potential financial donors.*

Directed to important consumer and trading countries of saiga parts and derivatives

16.96 *Important consumer and trading countries of saiga parts and derivatives, as identified by the Secretariat on the basis of CITES trade data, are encouraged to collaborate in managing and controlling trade in saiga antelope and to implement the actions regarding Sustainable Use and Trade (Section 3) contained in the Medium-Term International Work Programme for the Saiga Antelope (2011-2015), developed in support of the Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation, Restoration and Sustainable Use of the Saiga Antelope (Saiga spp.) and its Saiga Action Plan.*

16.97 *Important consumer and trading countries of saiga parts and derivatives are encouraged to contribute financially towards the in situ conservation of saiga antelopes in current range States.*

16.98 *Important consumer and trading countries of saiga parts and derivatives should provide, via the online saiga antelope database managed under the auspices of CMS, information on the*

measures and activities they undertook to implement the Medium-Term International Work Programme for the Saiga Antelope (2011-2015).

- 16.99 *Important consumer and trading countries of saiga parts and derivatives are encouraged to reduce consumption in saiga products and derivatives, for example through the use of alternative products with similar medicinal properties, and to implement in this respect the recommendations of the Urumqi workshop on the conservation and sustainable use of the saiga antelope (September 2010).*

Directed to the Secretariat

- 16.100 *Based on information submitted by the relevant range States and consumer and trading countries, and following consultation with the CMS Secretariat, the CITES Secretariat shall report to and, as necessary, make recommendations at regular meetings of the Standing Committee regarding the implementation of:*

- a) *Decision 14.91 (Rev. CoP16) regarding the implementation of the MTIWP (2011-2015) by current range States; and*
- b) *Decision 16.98 regarding the implementation of the MTIWP (2011-2015) by major consumer and trading countries.*

Directed to the Standing Committee

- 16.101 *The Standing Committee shall consider the reports submitted by the Secretariat, and, on their basis, propose its own recommendations for consideration at the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*

Background

3. In compliance with Decision 16.100, the Secretariat reported at the 65th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC65, Geneva, July 2014), explaining that saiga range States and the relevant consumer and trading countries had not provided information on the measures and activities they had undertaken, as requested in Decisions 14.93 (Rev. CoP16) and 16.98, and that the Secretariat was therefore unable to provide a report to the Standing Committee as directed in Decision 16.100. It nevertheless highlighted the launch of the website of the Saiga Resource Centre (<http://www.saigaresourcecentre.com>), Saiga News (a biannual newsletter of the Saiga Conservation Alliance), and the continued joint actions of the CITES Secretariat and the Secretariat of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS Secretariat) in favor of the conservation of saiga antelopes (see document [SC65 Doc. 40](#)).
4. The Committee noted the document and the oral report of the Secretariat. It agreed to the recommendations in subparagraph 13. b) of document [SC65 Doc. 40](#), and requested the Secretariat to issue a Notification to the Parties to seek the information mentioned therein.
5. The present report, submitted by the Secretariat to the Standing Committee in compliance with Decision 16.100, benefitted from considerable inputs from saiga antelope range States and important consumer and trading countries of saiga parts and derivatives, for which the Secretariat is particularly grateful. Much information was also generated at the Technical Workshop for the saiga antelope experts and the Third Meeting of Signatories of the Memorandum of Understanding concerning conservation, restoration and sustainable use of the saiga antelope (MOS3), held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on 26-29 October 2015 (<http://www.cms.int/saiga/en/meeting/third-meeting-signatories-saiga-mou-mos3>).

Decision 16.100, paragraph a): Implementation of the MTIWP (2011-2015) by range States

6. The Secretariats of CITES and CMS have been working in close cooperation since 2002, with saiga antelopes as one of their joint target species. CITES recognizes two species, *Saiga borealis* (distributed in Mongolia) and *Saiga tatarica* (Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), which are both included in Appendix II.
7. The CITES-CMS Joint Work Programme 2015-2020 was adopted at the 65th meeting of the CITES Standing Committee (see document [SC65 Doc.16.2](#)) and the 42nd meeting of the CMS Standing Committee ([UNEP/CMS/StC42/Doc.6.1](#)). It outlines the current joint activities on saiga antelopes. These

focus on supporting the implementation of the Medium-Term International Work Programme (MTIWP) associated with the Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation, Restoration and Sustainable Use of the Saiga Antelope (*Saiga* spp.), concluded under the auspices of CMS (Saiga MOU). A Joint CITES-CMS Programme Officer has taken up her functions as of July 2015, thanks to funding from the Government of Germany, to strengthen the implementation of the above-mentioned Work Programme between the two treaties.

8. The CITES Secretariat consulted and collaborated with the CMS Secretariat in the organization of the Third Meeting of Signatories of the Saiga MOU (MOS3), which was held from 26 to 29 October 2015 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The meeting reviewed the implementation of the Saiga MOU and the MTIWP for the period 2011 to 2015, and elaborated a new MTIWP for the period 2016 to 2020. The pre-session drafts of the overview report on the MOU implementation and the agreed MTIWP for the period 2016 to 2020 are available at <http://www.cms.int/saiga/en/meeting/third-meeting-signatories-saiga-mou-mos3>. The revised adopted versions of these documents are being finalized and will be posted on the same website shortly.
9. In preparation of MOS3, the CMS Secretariat invited the saiga range States (Kazakhstan, Mongolia, the Russian Federation, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) to submit national reports to the CMS Secretariat on the measures and activities they undertook to implement the MTIWP during the period 2011-2015. All range States have submitted such reports. The reports are available in the language in which they were received at <http://www.cms.int/saiga/en/meeting/third-meeting-signatories-saiga-mou-mos3>.
10. The national reports submitted by the range States were a primary source of information for the overview report on the MOU implementation for MOS3 referred to above. The overview report was prepared on behalf of the CMS Secretariat by the IUCN/SSC Antelope Specialist Group and the Saiga Conservation Alliance, with inputs from the CITES Secretariat, information provided by major consumer countries in compliance with Decision 16.96, and project information submitted by different organizations. It was further reviewed, updated and completed by the participants in MOS3.
11. The overview report concludes that the conservation status of saigas varies substantially between populations (see Table below). Overall, however, the status of *Saiga* spp. has not improved since the Second Meeting of Signatories (MOS2) in 2010. Between 2011 and 2014, three out of the five known populations reportedly increased and two declined. Sadly in 2015, the Betpak-dala population in Kazakhstan suffered a substantial die-off (estimated mortality >150,000 animals), bringing numbers down to the 2008 level. This means that only two populations (Mongolia, Ural [Kazakhstan, Russian Federation]) have an improved status since 2010.

Populations of Saiga based on information collected for the 2015 CMS MOU meeting, compared with the same information for the previous two MOU meetings. The figures are not directly comparable between years and populations because of variations in survey effort and methodology.

Population	2006	2010	2015	Trend
NW Pre-Caspian ¹ [RU]	15,000-20,000	10,000-20,000	4,500-5,000	Decreasing
Ural [KZ, RU] ²	12,900	27,140 ³	51,700	Increasing
Ustiurt [KZ, TM, UZ] ²	17,800	4,900	1,270	Decreasing
Betpak-dala [KZ] ²	18,300	53,440	31,300 ⁴	N/A
Mongolia [MN]	3,169	8016±1656	14,869 ⁵	Increasing
Total	67,169-72,169	103,496-113,496	99,639-100,139	

¹ Based on expert judgement rather than a population survey

² Numbers from Kazakhstan aerial survey (does not include resident populations in other countries [UZ particularly] or those outside survey area [Betpak-dala particularly]).

³ 39,060 estimated in April 2010, 11,920 estimated died in disease outbreak in May 2010

⁴ Result of an aerial survey in June, counting adults only, not calves. The estimated population size in April 2015 was 242,500. This suggests that 211,200 adult saigas died in the disease outbreak in May 2015 [but see paragraphs 10 and 27]

⁵ 2014 estimate based on a ground survey.

Source: [Overview report on conservation status and MoU implementation](#)

12. The report further provides a detailed analysis of the implementation of the MTIWP (2011-2015) by *Saiga* spp. range States.

Decision 16.100, paragraph b): Implementation of the MTIWP (2011-2015) by major consumer and trading countries.

13. The range States of *Saiga* spp. have stopped commercial exports of specimens of the species for nearly a decade (such exports involved mainly saiga horn to Asian countries for use in traditional Asian medicines). The current legal trade in, and consumption of saiga specimens, primarily in Asia, is essentially based on saiga horn that was imported before these export suspensions took effect. The ongoing utilisation of saiga products is gradually reducing the stocks of saiga horn in Asian consuming and trading countries. In this light, Decision 16.99 encouraged important consumer and trading countries to reduce consumption in saiga products and derivatives, for example through the use of alternative products with similar medicinal properties.
14. In its report to the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP14, The Hague, 2007), the Secretariat wrote that with an estimated consumption of saiga horn in China alone of between 6,000 and 10,000 kg a year and a persistent high demand in Asian communities, the stockpiles registered at the time would last for approximately another 10 to 15 years (see document [CoP14 Doc. 56](#)). In the meantime, China took measures to reduce the use of saiga horn by e.g. improved stock management, decreasing the number of medicines that can contain saiga, lowering prescribed doses and developing labelling schemes for medicines. Singapore has equally reported measures to reduce consumption (see paragraph 23).
15. Pursuant to CITES Decision 16.100 paragraph b), the CITES Secretariat invited major saiga consumer and trading countries (China, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam) to provide information on the measures and activities undertaken to implement the MTIWP during the period 2011-2015. At the time of writing, China, Japan, Malaysia and Singapore had submitted their reports to the CITES Secretariat. The information that the four Parties provided is incorporated in this document. The reports of Japan, Malaysia and Singapore are available at <http://www.cms.int/saiga/en/meeting/third-meeting-signatories-saiga-mou-mos3>.
16. Regarding international trade in saiga parts and derivatives, data from the CITES Trade Database for the period 2011-2013¹ suggests that following very high levels of trade in the early 2000s, reported levels of international trade have declined substantially. However, trade has continued, predominately in saiga horns, albeit at low levels (see Table below). The data further suggests that the main exporters globally were China and Hong Kong (SAR), while Japan and Hong Kong (SAR) were the main importers. The forms in which saiga is most commonly traded are horns, horn cuttings, and finished medicines.

Product	Reported by	2011	2012	2013
<i>Derivatives (items)</i>	Importer reported	194		
	Exporter reported			
<i>Derivatives (kg)</i>	Importer reported	139		
	Exporter reported	17	12	
<i>Horns (kg)</i>	Importer reported	465	316	308
	Exporter reported	462	463	100

Source: CITES Trade Database

17. Furthermore, the information submitted by China, Japan, Malaysia and Singapore shows that substantive stock of saiga horns and other saiga products continue to exist in these countries. Singapore reported to hold almost 20 tonnes, owned by traditional Chinese medicine traders (importers, exporters and retailers).
18. All four countries reported that they had enacted legislation to regulate international trade in saiga products in accordance with the provisions of CITES. With regard to the enforcement of these regulations, China, Japan and Singapore report challenges related to the detection of saiga parts in finished products such as cooling drinks or medicines, and to the identification of pre-convention specimens. Singapore is suggesting focusing enforcement efforts on saiga horns rather than products that contain only traces of saiga horns. China reports the successful introduction of an authorized label for saiga products that halted sales of uncertified saiga products. China is further suggesting that increased captive breeding could reduce the remaining illegal trade in saiga products.

¹ At the time of writing, data was only available up to 2013.

19. Regarding seizures, the CITES Secretariat provided in document [CoP16 Inf. 4](#) an overview of seizures of saiga parts and derivatives for the period from 2007 to September 2012 at the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES.
20. For the period from 2012 to 2015, China, Japan and Malaysia reported additional seizures.
 - a) China reported ten seizures of saiga parts and derivatives between 2012 and 2014. All of these seizures consisted of saiga horns, with one particularly large seizure of 296 kg intercepted in June 2014, and coming from Kazakhstan. Five of the ten shipments intercepted originated from Singapore, 2 each from Kazakhstan and Russia, and one from China. Nine persons have been prosecuted in relation to these seizures.
 - b) For the same time period, Japan reported five seizures, one of which consisted of 100 horns and horn cuttings coming from China. Four seizures consisted of medicinal products, coming from China or the Republic of Korea.
 - c) Malaysia reported one seizure of unknown origin in 2012, consisting of horn cuttings and medicinal products. Three persons have been prosecuted in relation to the seizure in Malaysia.
21. In November 2015, the Secretariat also learned about a yet unconfirmed, significant seizure of 5,300 saiga horns, apparently transported from Kyrgyzstan to China on 30 October 2015. The seizure took place at the Torugart checkpoint at the border between the two countries. China is investigating a number of suspects implicated in the seizure, including a truck driver and a trader.
22. Overall, the number of shipments of saiga parts and derivatives that were seized due to concerns about their legal status is declining, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (see Table below). Globally, almost all the shipments intercepted came from China, consisted of medicinal products, and were seized in Europe and the United States of America.

Year	Number of seizures
2010	100
2011	83
2012	74
2013	47
2014	46
2015 (to date)	1

Source: UNODC

23. Regarding education and awareness-raising, China, Malaysia and Singapore reported that they have taken actions to improve public awareness regarding the trade in saiga parts and derivatives.
 - a) China issues a warning to citizens travelling abroad not to buy or carry wildlife products, including saiga specimens. Chinese internet and courier companies further support a zero tolerance policy towards illegal wildlife products.
 - b) Malaysia organized regular awareness campaigns, programmes and exhibitions focussed on wildlife products, including saiga specimens.
 - c) Singapore organizes regular circulars, meetings and dialogue sessions with traders and trade associations about CITES and its requirements, and distributes awareness-raising materials (in Chinese) to the traders, including traditional Chinese medicine retail shops. Singapore further facilitates the import of substitutes for saiga horns such as sheep horns and deer antlers derived from non-CITES-listed species. The use of substitutes has reduced consumption and imports of saiga horns in Singapore.

Conclusions

24. Overall, the conservation status of the saiga antelope remains of concern. Significant threats to wild saiga antelope populations include habitat loss, competition with livestock, climate change, fragmentation, disease and barriers to migration (noting that the levels of these threats differ from one range State to

another). However, all range States indicate that illegal hunting for meat and horn (the former for domestic trade; the latter for international trade) remains a major threat.

25. The legal international trade in saiga parts and derivatives seems to decline, and so is the number of seizures made outside Asia of products containing (or claiming to contain) saiga. While some believe that also seizures within Asia and at borders between range and consumer States may be declining, some large confiscations of saiga horn have been reported in the course of the last three year, indicating that illegal trade continues. This undermines the efforts to conserve and restore saiga antelope populations, and prevents future sustainable use. The conservation actions outlined in the MTIWP for the period 2016 to 2020 therefore merit full attention. There remains a genuine need for CITES to continue to support these efforts.
26. The Secretariat recommends that the current decisions on saiga antelope be revised and extended with a view to:
 - a) Call for range States and important consumer and trading countries to contribute to the effective implementation of the Medium Term International Work Programme (MTIWP) 2016-2020;
 - b) Encourage collaboration between range States and consumer countries to enhance *in situ* conservation of saiga antelopes, develop joint actions and programmes, and engage with traditional medicine industries;
 - c) Address challenges in controlling illicit trade in saiga horns and derivatives thereof by: encouraging the development of tools that can facilitate the identification, sourcing and aging of saiga horn; ensuring effective stockpile management; promoting training and cross-border collaboration amongst enforcement agencies; and tackling new illegal trade channels such as those using social media;
 - d) Encourage responsible use of saiga and saiga products by undertaking efforts to manage unsustainable consumption, stimulating alternatives and developing labelling schemes;
 - e) Encourage collaboration between governments, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, multilateral environmental agreements and other stakeholders in the conservation and restoration of saiga antelopes; and
 - f) Ensure that progress with the implementation of the decisions can be monitored through reporting.

Draft text for such Decisions can be found in the Annex to the present document.

Recommendations

27. The Standing Committee is invited to note the information contained in this document.
28. The Standing Committee is invited to note the outcomes of the Third Meeting of Signatories of the Saiga MOU (MOS3, Tashkent, October 2015), and to welcome the new Medium Term International Work Programme for the period 2016 to 2020.
29. In compliance with Decision 16.101, the Standing Committee is invited to consider recommendations for consideration at the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties. These could be based on the suggestions made by the Secretariat in paragraph 26 and the Annex to the present document.

**Draft decisions on saiga antelope, *Saiga* spp., for consideration
at the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties**

Directed to range States of saiga antelope (*Saiga* spp.) (Kazakhstan, Mongolia, the Russian Federation, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), and important consumer and trading countries of saiga parts and derivatives

17.XX(1) The range States of the saiga antelope (*Saiga* spp.) and important consumer and trading countries of saiga parts and derivatives, as identified by the Secretariat on the basis of CITES trade data, should:

- (a) fully implement the measures directed to them in the *Medium-Term International Work Programme for the Saiga Antelope (2016-2020)* [MTIWP (2016-2020)], developed in support of the Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation, Restoration and Sustainable Use of the Saiga Antelope (*Saiga* spp.) and its Saiga Action Plan; and
- (b) provide information to the Secretariat on the measures and activities they undertook to implement the actions directed to them in the MTIWP (2016-2020).

17.XX(2) Important consumer and trading countries of saiga parts and derivatives are encouraged to carefully manage the trade in, and consumption of saiga products and derivatives, for example through promoting the use of alternative products with similar medicinal properties, engaging with traditional Asian medicine industries and consumers of saiga products, education and information campaigns, and developing labelling schemes.

17.XX(3) Range States of *Saiga* spp. and important consumer and trading countries of saiga parts and derivatives are encouraged to address challenges in controlling illicit trade in saiga horns and derivatives thereof by:

- a) supporting the development of tools to facilitate the identification, sourcing and aging of saiga horns;
- b) ensuring effective stockpile management;
- c) promoting training of, and cross-border collaboration amongst enforcement agencies; and
- d) tackling new illegal trade channels such as those using social media.

17.XX(4) Range States of *Saiga* spp. and important consumer and trading countries of saiga parts and derivatives are encouraged to collaborate to enhance *in situ* conservation of saiga antelopes, develop joined actions and programmes in support of saiga conservation and restoration, and leverage financial and other resources for undertaking these activities and supporting the implementation of Decisions 17.xx(1) to 17.xx(3).

Directed to the Secretariat

17.XX(5) Based on information submitted by range States and consumer and trading countries, and in collaboration with the CMS Secretariat, the CITES Secretariat shall report to, and, as necessary, make recommendations at the 70th meeting of the Standing Committee regarding the implementation of Decisions 17.XX(1) to 17.XX(4) and 17.XX(7).

Directed to the Standing Committee

17.XX(6) The Standing Committee shall consider at its 70th meeting the report submitted by the Secretariat, and, on its basis, propose its own recommendations for consideration at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Directed to Saiga antelope range States, Parties, Multilateral Environmental Agreements, Intergovernmental Organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations, and other stakeholders

17.XX(7) Saiga antelope range States, Parties, Multilateral Environmental Agreements, Intergovernmental Organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations, and other stakeholders are encouraged to collaborate in the conservation and restoration of the saiga antelope (*Saiga* spp.), and support the implementation of the MTIWP (2016-2020) and Decisions 17.xx(1) to 17.xx(4).